*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley  *Commissioner* |  |
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# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:** | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner |
| **Date:** | May 9, 2018 |
| **Subject:** | Charter Schools – Notification of Intended Action to Remove Conditions for Advanced Math and Science Academy Charter School |

At its meeting in February 2013, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) authorized the Commissioner to act on its behalf in “(a) granting charter renewals that do not involve probation; (b) approving charter amendments that do not involve changes in grade span, maximum enrollment, or districts served; and (c) removing or continuing conditions imposed on charters of charter schools; provided that the Commissioner shall report to the Board on all charter renewals, charter amendments, and conditions that have been so approved; and provided further, that the Commissioner shall notify the Board in advance of all such intended actions, and a Board member may request that the Commissioner place the charter matter(s) on the agenda of the Board for discussion and action.”

I intend to remove the conditions currently imposed on the charter of Advanced Math and Science Academy Charter School (AMSA). I summarize my rationale for this decision below, details about the school can be found starting on page two of this memorandum.

In 2015, the school’s charter was renewed with conditions related to school leadership and governance. In June 2016, following regular reports from the school’s board of trustees, targeted site visits, and ongoing correspondence from members of the school’s community, Commissioner Mitchell D. Chester refined and extended the conditions. Based upon evidence it submitted and a targeted site visit conducted in December 2017, the school has now met the remaining conditions imposed on its charter.

Please let me know by **Wednesday, May 16, 2018** if you wish to have this proposed action brought to the full Board for review and vote at its meeting scheduled for May 22, 2018.

| **Advanced Math and Science Academy Charter School (AMSA)** | | | |
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| **Type of Charter** | Commonwealth | **Location** | Marlborough |
| **Regional or Non-Regional** | Regional | **Districts in Region** | Clinton, Hudson, Marlborough, Maynard |
| **Year Opened** | 2005 | **Year(s) Renewed** | 2010, 2015 |
| **Maximum Enrollment** | 966 | **Current Enrollment** | 993[[1]](#footnote-1) |
| **Chartered Grade Span** | 6-12 | **Current Grade Span** | 6-12 |
| **Students on Waitlist** | 537[[2]](#footnote-2) | **Current Age of school** | 13 |
| **Mission Statement:**  The Advanced Math and Science Academy Charter School will create an atmosphere of celebration of knowledge where children of all backgrounds and abilities excel in all subjects, especially in math, science, and technology, empowering them to succeed in the workplace in our modern high-tech world. | | | |

As noted above, in 2015, Commissioner Chester imposed conditions pertaining to governance and school leadership on AMSA’s charter as part of its second renewal. Since the imposition of conditions, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) has visited the school three times: in the school’s 11th, 12th, and 13th years of operation. Based on evidence gathered during the site visit for Year 11, Commissioner Chester extended the conditions in June 2016.

In Year 12, the 2016-2017 school year, the Department visited the school immediately following the appointment of a new executive director and principal. During that visit, the Department found that the school had met the conditions, with a few concerns noted. Because of the school’s history of leadership turnover, as documented in the attached site visit reports, and the concerns regarding the conditions, the Department conducted a follow-up visit in Year 13.[[3]](#footnote-3) As indicated by the data below, AMSA has now met the conditions on its charter and made improvements to its school leadership and governance practices.

**Progress Towards Meeting Conditions**

**Condition 1:** Until further notice, AMSA must submit to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department), at [charterschools@doe.mass.edu](mailto:charterschools@doe.mass.edu) or 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA, 02148, Board meeting agendas, materials, and minutes prior to each Board meeting at the same time that these items are sent to the school’s Board members. Additionally, if Board materials do not already include this information, the school must also submit monthly financial statements.

**Status: Ongoing**

The school has submitted its monthly board meeting agendas, materials, and minutes prior to each board meeting as required. The board has also submitted financial reports.

**Condition 2:** By September 30, 2016, AMSA’s Board of Trustees will create or select an evaluation system for the executive director to ensure regular, systematic, measurable, and transparent evaluation that aligns with best practices and provides the school leader with robust supervision and evaluation.

**Status: Met**

Based on evidence gathered during the Year 12 site visit, the Department found that while the school met this condition, some concerns remained. The school submitted an evaluation system created by BoardOnTrack in a timely manner. The Department requested the school to revise the proposed evaluation system, and the school did so. The board of trustees evaluated the school’s former executive director in September 2016 using the evaluation system. During the site visit, however, board members reported that they were not using the evaluation system with the acting executive director. Board members and the acting executive director reported that he would be evaluated using the school’s spring climate survey. The board reported that if the acting director continued next year, they would resume use of the BoardOnTrack evaluation system.

In Year 13, the school documented evaluation of the executive director using the BoardOnTrack tool. The process includes annual goal-setting, a mid-year progress report, and a summative evaluation at the end of the year. The board and leaders used the tool and process to evaluate the executive director. The executive director has four goals on which he is being evaluated this school year, and the board is using BoardOnTrack to collect survey data from staff members and other stakeholders.

**Condition 3:** By September 30, 2016, to ensure regular, systematic, measurable, and transparent evaluation that aligns with best practices and provides school leadership with robust supervision and evaluation, AMSA will create or select an evaluation system for school leadership, including (but not limited to) the principal and vice principal positions.

**Status: Met**

In Year 12, the Department found that while the school met this condition, some concerns remained. The school submitted an evaluation system by the due date. The Department requested the school to revise the proposed evaluation system, and the school subsequently did so. The school’s former executive director and principal resigned in January 2017, shortly before the Department’s visit in Year 12. During the visit, the acting executive director and principal reported that they were aware of the evaluation systems submitted to the Department but had not yet reviewed them.

In Year 13, leaders and teachers reported that the school adopted a new evaluation system for them. Leaders stated that they will use TeachPoint to evaluate teachers and administrators. Leaders explained that the evaluation criteria were developed collaboratively by a team of teachers and leaders and unanimously approved by staff vote. Leaders stated that staff developed goals for their evaluations this fall. Staff met with supervisors to discuss progress toward goals in February and will conduct final evaluations this spring.

**Additional Evidence**

The Department conducted a site visit for AMSA on December 7, 2017. The full site visit report is attached and below are some key findings related to the conditions.

* The school leadership team is in the process of establishing clear roles and responsibilities for staff and has instituted clear decision-making and communication processes that are well understood. Stakeholders reported that the school leaders are refocused on the school’s mission and that staff morale has improved.
* The board of trustees provides appropriate oversight and governance to the school. The board has recently established an evaluation system for the school leader and is starting the strategic planning process.

**Recommendation**

Given this evidence, presented in more detail in the attached site visit reports, I intend to remove the conditions currently imposed on the charter of AMSA.

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If you have any questions regarding this recommendation or require additional information, please contact Alison Bagg, Director of the Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign (781-338-3218); Cliff Chuang, Senior Associate Commissioner (781-338-3222); or me.

Attachments: Advanced Math and Science Academy Charter School Year 13 Targeted Site Visit Report

Advanced Math and Science Academy Charter School Year 12 Site Visit Report

1. The school is currently overenrolled by 27 students and, as a result, is out of compliance with the terms of its charter. The school was previously overenrolled between 2012-2013 and 2015-2016. In March 2018, AMSA worked with the Department to create an enrollment management plan that will bring the school into compliance with its maximum enrollment by 2019-2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. As reported on March 15, 2017, in the Massachusetts Charter School Waitlist Initial Report for 2017-2018 (FY18). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Year 13 is the current (2017-2018) school year. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)